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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



THE

Growth of the Gospel:

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE LAMENTED DEATH OF

THE RAJAH RAMMOHUN ROY;

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, NOV. 10TH, 1833,

IN THE

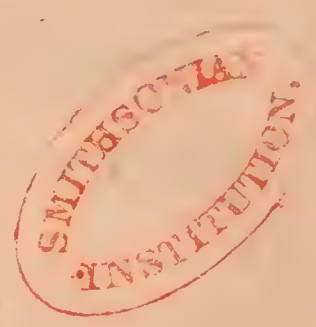
MEETING-HOUSE OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CONGREGATION, BELFAST,

BY

J. SCOTT PORTER,

ASSISTANT PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATION.

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BELFAST:

PUBLISHED BY H. GREER, HIGH-STREET

1833.

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TO THE
REV. WILLIAM BRUCE, D.D.

Dear Sir,

I feel happy in being permitted to usher the following pages into the world, with the sanction of your venerable name prefixed.

Allow me to take this opportunity of recording my high estimation of your character, acquirements, and services to the cause of truth ; as well as my heartfelt gratitude, for the kindness which I have uniformly experienced from you, since our acquaintance commenced : and to subscribe myself,

With respect and affection,

Your obliged and faithful friend,

J. SCOTT PORTER.

Belfast, November, 1833.

THE
GROWTH OF THE GOSPEL.

MATT. xiii. 31, 32.

“ The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed ; which a man took and sowed in his field ;—which indeed is the least of all seeds ; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree : so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”

THIS is a prophetic parable. It announces to the disciples of Jesus, the future triumphant progress of the faith which Christ, when he delivered it, was engaged in teaching ; and of which they were soon to become the apostles. “ *The kingdom of Heaven,*”—that is Christianity,—“ *is like,*” in its lowly origin, “ *to a grain of sinapi, which a man took and sowed in his field ; which, indeed, is the least of all the seeds*” that were employed by the Jews for agricultural purposes ;—“ *but when it is grown up, it is the greatest among herbs,*

*and becometh a tree," in height and appearance : " so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches."**

The progress of Christianity has completely verified this prediction of its founder. At first, it was to the eye of a casual observer, mean and contemptible, insignificant as the minute grain to which it is compared in the parable. Its founder was the peasant son of a rustic carpenter ; without connexions ; without the advantages of birth, or rank, or education. He lived in poverty and died in shame. His missionaries were persons of the same humble rank with himself. They were fishermen, tax-gatherers, and tent-makers. With a single exception, they were plain, unlearned men ; who could bring nothing to the support of the cause which they espoused, but a sound, though uncultivated understanding ; and an honest zeal for the diffusion of truth. The first converts to the Gospel moved in humble life. Not many rich, not many noble, not many learned were called.—None of the rulers, none of the Pharisees believed on him in whose name the doctrine of the cross was proclaimed. Those who embraced Christianity, were not even considerable in number, when compared with the mass of persons in their own class of society. A more contemptible origin could scarcely be assigned to any sect : none which seemed to augur a more certain or a more speedy overthrow.

But the difficulties of their position, did not dismay Jesus and his apostles. The grain of seed entrusted to them was small ; but they cast it into the earth, trust-

* It is evident, from this passage, and still more from the Rabbinical writings, that our translators were mistaken, in supposing the plant in question to be mustard. See the authorities quoted by Schleusner, v Sinapi.

fully, in the spirit of faith. Well they knew, that the great husbandman would watch over the growth of that, which, confiding in his care, they committed to the nurturing influences of earth and Heaven.—And, therefore, they persevered.—Earthly friends were few and weak ; but their Heavenly advocate they knew to be all-powerful and all-sufficient. Their enemies were many and influential. The magistrates, the priests, and the people, were arrayed against them. But they felt themselves to be instruments in the hands of one against whom neither people, priest, nor magistrate could avail. And, therefore, did they persevere. They saw the perils which they encountered. Christ well foreknew every pang that himself endured ; he frequently foretold every calamity that befel his companions and fellow labourers. But he despised the terrors of the world, and so did they. Unmoved by the contempt of men, they devoted themselves to their improvement and happiness. Undeterred by cruel insults heaped upon them by those whose benefit they sought, they persevered in their noble task. Onwards, onwards, was their motto. Through good, through ill ;—through dangers, discouragements, and death, they preached to men, the glad message from the skies.

And they laboured not in vain. Their trust in Divine Providence was not misplaced. They reaped, partially, even in their lifetime, the reward of their exertions,—for they saw their doctrine beginning to spread in many quarters ; and they beheld indications of approaching usefulness appearing in many more. In the ages immediately succeeding them, the progress of the faith was rapid. It was embraced by whole nations. The con-

verts were not confined, as they had been at first, to the lower ranks of society ; they belonged to every class, profession and dignity. There were among them the rich and the poor ;—the lowly and the lofty ;—the unlettered peasant, and the learned philosopher ;—nay,—kings and emperors did not disdain to enrol themselves among the followers of the crucified Galilean. And such, notwithstanding all the efforts of adversaries,—and, what is a much more alarming source of danger, all the misconduct of supposed friends,—such is still the condition of Christianity. It is at least outwardly professed by the greatest and the noblest, the most powerful and illustrious personages, among the most cultivated and influential nations on the face of the earth. Christianity, alone, of all the religions that are professed among mankind, is on the advance. Large tracts and regions have been already added to its dominions ; some at a comparatively recent period. And we see enough to convince us, that the hope of its becoming, at last, a universal faith, is no chimerical project. This is the end at which Christianity aims. With no other triumph, short of this, will it be satisfied. If we may judge from those indications which its progress hitherto affords, it seems clearly to be destined to realise the idea which it first taught men to entertain,—that of a faith embraced by all, and purifying every soul.

When our Saviour speaks of the small grain of seed becoming a tree, in whose branches the birds of the air may rest,—he is generally understood, by commentators, as announcing the accession to his ranks of nobles, princes, and sovereigns. The supposition is at least plausible : for the birds whose wing bears them aloft to

the higher regions of the atmosphere, may be allowed to form no unfit emblems of the persons who in society fill the loftiest stations. But I see no necessity for confining the prophecy conveyed in the parable, to one kind of elevation. The men whom God has made the depositories of power, are, no doubt, high and lofty, in comparison with other men. But there are others, moving in much less conspicuous tracks, who are yet possessed of a better species of grandeur. There are the great in soul ; the great in virtue. Yes ;—there are men whose intellectual powers have taken such flights into the lofty regions of knowledge, that they could look down and see beneath them lying, all the pride of wide dominion and extended fame ! There are men who have achieved, in their own breasts, victories over self ; over passion, appetite, and desire, compared with which, the conquests of Alexander or Napoleon, were but the amusements of children. Such characters, God has from time to time raised up to adorn and dignify the race of mankind ; to spread around them the lights of science and philosophy ; to kindle the torch of philanthropy ; to fan the genial flame of benevolence ; and to teach the base, the grovelling, and the low in soul,—the little vulgar, and the great,—what human nature is, and to what an elevation it may soar. In my mind, the accession of one of these, confers more glory on Christianity, than would accrue from the homage of a host of kings. Were I called on to point out the person whose testimony I considered as of the greatest importance to the Gospel, I should direct my finger, not to the wealthy, the dignified, the powerful ;—not to the warrior, the statesman, or the sovereign ;—but to some patient persevering vo-

tary of truth and righteousness. I should select some one who lived in calm seclusion from the turmoil of business, and the pomps of greatness, devoting all the energies of a mighty spirit to the discovery and diffusion of sound principles ; little regardful whether his doctrines might be popular, or the reverse ; provided only they commended themselves to his own reason ; and who practised what he taught.

And, my friends, I could point out, not one but *many* such examples. I could select those whose vigorous minds have run the most excursive career into the realms of science and fancy,—but who returned to take their rest in the branches of the Christian Revelation ; and who valued far more than those intellectual qualities and attainments, in which they outstripped all their contemporaries, the possession of that invaluable treasure, the truth as it is in Jesus. I could point to him who sung in sublime accents, the fall and the recovery of man,—the strife of angels, and the overthrow of fiends ; the glorious majesty of Heaven, and the gloomy horrors of the infernal abyss ;—MILTON ! He was a Christian ; — a zealous, a conscientious Christian ;—a Christian upon rational and deliberate conviction ;—a Christian who spent much of his time, and employed much of his talent in elucidating the sense of those venerable writings in which the principles of the faith are recorded ; and who esteemed this the noblest occupation of his mental energies. And so was NEWTON : he whose comprehensive soul grasped the huge machinery of the universe in its embrace ; and reduced to order the fragments of a mighty plan, before but imperfectly understood. So too was LOCKE ; who led the way to the knowledge

of the human mind ; teaching the student of nature to look inwards ; and revealing to him a world there, not less interesting nor less important in its relations, than the world without. And such was LARDNER, the close, accurate, patient investigator of antiquity ;—whose assiduity never tired ; whose inquiring spirit was never satisfied while any fact relating to the early history of the faith was unexplored ; and whose candour in stating the result of his inquiries, has never been impeached, even by those whose judgment he controverted, and whose arguments he exposed. Such too was Sir WILLIAM JONES, whose researches into the language, history, and records of the Oriental nations, have never been equalled by the labours of any other scholar, before or since his day ; and who undertook these inquiries for this among other important purposes,—that he might determine whether or not there existed in the literature of the East any authentic history irreconcilable with the Christian Scriptures. The result of his search was his confirmation in the faith of Jesus : a conclusion the more important,—because, as he himself declares, he would not have hesitated to avow, and had no motive to conceal the contrary inference, if it had appeared to be supported by the facts of the case, and sound argument. And,—not to trouble you by enumerating others, whom it would be easy to add to the list,—such was one, whose name I do not hesitate to introduce in connexion with those just mentioned, because I conceive him to have been in many respects the equal, and in some the superior of the greatest among them ;—I mean the late illustrious Christian Brahmin,—the RAJAH RAM-MOHUN ROY. These and such as these are the great men

whose names add weight and value to their testimony. These were the truly great ;—great not by the accident of birth,—not by the circumstances of fortune,—not by the chances of conquest, nor by the apportionment of worldly dominion ; but great in genius, learning, and virtue. The dominion they have exercised, is over the spirit of man, the immortal soul,—not the gross material frame. Their patent of nobility bears the stamp and seal of the celestial chancery. When I contemplate the conduct and history of these illustrious sages ;—when I witness their ardour in promoting the knowledge of divine truth ;—when I see them exerting, in this holiest and best of causes, the transcendant abilities with which they were gifted by their Creator ;—I am struck with the fulfilment of my Saviour’s prophetic similitude :—*“ The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a grain of seed, which a man took and sowed in his field ;—which is indeed the least of all seeds ; but when it is sprung up, it becometh a tree,”* in whose branches the high soaring birds of Heaven take refuge. My faith is strengthened, when I witness the accomplishment of this seemingly most improbable prediction. I am made to feel that though Heaven and earth may pass away, the words of Jesus shall not pass away. And I revere that Gospel, which though first preached to the poor, and, more than any other religion, adapted to the wants of persons in humble life, is not less suited to the requirements of the most refined and enlightened minds.

I have mentioned the lately deceased RAJAH RAMMOHUN ROY, as one whose talents and history entitle him to be ranked among those men of illustrious soul, to whom, as it appears to me, the phrase in the parable of

our Saviour may be most expressively referred : and a brief survey of the leading facts in his eventful life, will be sufficient to justify the estimate I have formed.

The ancestors of this extraordinary man were of high rank among their countrymen. They belonged to the Brahmin caste ; from which the priests of the Hindoo worship are always selected. This caste, as is well known, is invested with pre-eminent dignity and authority among the Indians, and is even viewed with a religious veneration. The ancestors of Rammohun Roy, and, of course, the Rajah himself, as well as all their other descendants, belonged to one of the highest of the *orders* or classes into which the sacred caste is divided. His remote progenitors, from time immemorial, had devoted themselves to the office of the priesthood, and the religious duties of their race ; but, about 140 years ago, the then representative of the family withdrew from these spiritual and sacerdotal functions, to mingle with the competitors in the race of ambition. Several of his descendants subsequently filled the highest political offices, which Hindoos were allowed to hold, under the Government of the Mahomedan conquerors of India. The grandfather of Rammohun Roy resigned the honours and advantages of state, upon some disgust ; and retired from the court to live upon his paternal property. His son, Ram Hant Roy, followed his example. This person had three sons,—of whom the third was Rammohun Roy, the subject of the present notice ; who was born in the year 1780, in the district of Burdwan.

The early literary education of Rammohun Roy appears to have been sedulously watched over. With lan-

guages, in particular, he soon obtained an extensive and intimate acquaintance. The Bengallee, which is the common language of Burdwan, was his vernacular tongue. In addition to this, he learned Hindoostanee and Persian, under the paternal roof. Both of these he knew as familiarly as his mother tongue ; and we are assured, by competent authority, that with the latter, which is the court language of India, he possessed a critical acquaintance. “He had read and tasted the beauties of its poets ; and often recited with enthusiasm the mystic strains of Hafiz, and the fine moral maxims of Sadi.”—“In the cool of the evening,” says Mr. Arnot, “while driving round Calcutta, under the mild rays of the moon, so ineffably beautiful in that climate, how delightful to hear him repeat the verses of his favourite bards.” Perhaps his familiarity with the writings of Mahomedan authors may have been one means of preparing his mind, in some degree, for the reception of the great truth ; that God is one pure and spiritual being :—and may have led the way to his final rejection of those three hundred and thirty millions of divinities, with whom modern Hindooism has crowded the areas of its paradise.

Rammohun Roy was sent, at an early age, to acquire a knowledge of the Arabic language and literature, at the Mahomedan College, at Patna. It was here that he studied the sciences of Mathematics and Logic, by means of Arabic translations of the writings of Euclid and Aristotle. It is a curious fact, that these are the same books which are to this day employed as text-works in the University of Oxford ; and it is surely a proud testimony to ancient genius, that writings, composed in Greece two thousand years ago, are at present employ-

ed as the vehicles of knowledge,—on the banks of the Isis and those of the Ganges : regions never penetrated by any Greek of the classic period. The habits of close and accurate reasoning which studies like these contributed to form, are conspicuous in all the publications of Rammohun Roy. We can scarcely doubt that his early intimacy with the Moslem doctors, at Patna,—whose characters he respected, and to whom he looked with gratitude, as the means of instilling into his mind so much valuable knowledge,—must have materially weakened his prejudices in favour of the abominable religion in which he had been brought up ; and in whose principles he had been sedulously instructed.

His mother's relations, being Brahmins, not only by birth and caste, but also by *profession*,—and being as such, engaged in the service of the temples, whence a large revenue was derived,—it is not wonderful that she was a zealous advocate for all the observances and tenets of Hindooism. At her suggestion, as I have reason to believe, Rammohun Roy was sent to Calcutta, that he might acquire a knowledge of the Sanscrit language, in which the sacred books of the Hindoos are composed ; and thus qualify himself for engaging in the offices of religion, according to the Brahminical rites. This was the service for which she had destined her son. It would have been her delight and pride to see him enter on the sacred profession which had been followed by so many of his race. The rest of the family concurred in this desire : but her hopes and their wishes were frustrated by the avowal of principles which their object had even then adopted. At the early age of sixteen, he composed a tract against Hindoo idolatry ; which, though

never published, gave great offence to both his parents ; so great that he was obliged to remove from the home in which he had been brought up. A limited sum allowed him by his father for necessary expenses, was now all that he could count upon as his own : and he was given to understand, that at his father's death he would be deprived of that portion of the inheritance which would otherwise have been his. While thus exiled from his father's house, he undertook and accomplished an extensive tour, through various countries, both within and without the limits of Hindoostan. He had set out on his travels with a most determined hostility to the British name and power in India ; and this feeling accompanied him for the greater part of his tour ; but, after witnessing the tyranny, oppression, and robbery, openly practised by the native governments, and comparing with these the security and comfort enjoyed by the subjects of the British power, he completely changed his views ; and although I am well aware that to the last he cherished a hope that the Indian people might gradually be rendered fit for self-government,—yet he regarded the present continuance of British power in the Peninsula, as one of the best means for effecting this desirable result. It is in this spirit that he writes in one of his publications:—" I now conclude my Essay, by offering up thanks to the Supreme Disposer of the events of this universe, for having unexpectedly delivered this country from the long-continued tyranny of its former rulers, and placed it under the Government of the English ; a nation, who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty, but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free

inquiry into literary and religious subjects among those nations, to which their influence extends.”* - Such a change of sentiment, avowed in such a manner, and from such motives, is equally honourable to the candour and to the benevolence of the writer. It is highly probable that this alteration of political opinion may have contributed indirectly to his adoption of Christianity at a subsequent period ; by inducing him to enter into the service of the East India Company, and to cultivate the society of enlightened Englishmen.

In the course of his peregrinations, Rammohun Roy spent two or three years of his exile in Thibet ; where he frequently incurred the indignation of the worshippers of the Dalai Lama, by the open rejection of their doctrine, that this pretended Deity, who is a mere man, —the creature and the victim of the priests, was the creator and supporter of the world. During his long wanderings, he received much kindness from the female part of his family ; and it has been conjectured that we may perhaps trace to this circumstance, his uniform courtesy and respect to the female sex. If so, we may surely refer to the same early impressions, the exertions which he afterwards made for the abolition of the Suttee,—or self-sacrifice of the widow on her husband’s funeral pile.

At the age of twenty, he was recalled home ; the indignation of his father having been somewhat abated, or soothed by the intercession of friends. Soon afterwards, he entered into the service of the East India Company, and became Dewan, or Chief Native Collector of the

* See “ Final Appeal, &c.,” p. 672, London Edition.

Revenue, in the district of Rungpoor. He here enjoyed the distinguished regard of those European gentlemen who were associated with him in office; with some of whom, and more especially with a Mr. Digby, of the Honourable Company's Civil Service, he formed a permanent intimacy and friendship. This gentleman and Rammohun Roy commenced and pursued together, a course of study, in Eastern and European languages; in which they appear to have mutually assisted each other. It was about this time, and while in this employment, that he acquired that correct taste and elegance in the use of the English tongue, which marked his style; and which at first suggested in many minds, a doubt whether his works could be the production of a foreigner. The correctness of his style is indeed wonderful. I do not think, that in the whole of his English works, a single vulgar phrase is employed; nor any idiomatic expression incorrectly applied. Those who have attempted composition in a foreign tongue, of a structure and genius widely different from their own, will know how to appreciate the difficulties which must have been previously overcome. Rammohun Roy, as I am able to state, from personal intercourse with him, during his residence in London, had read several of the best English authors,—admired their beauties, and quoted select passages from them, in conversation, with remarkable ease and propriety of allusion. It is not unimportant to note his acquisition of the English language; for there cannot be the slightest doubt that the treasures which it unlocked, enriched his mind with the germs of many of those ideas, which he afterwards developed in his works.

In 1804, his father died ; bequeathing to Rammohun Roy no part of his property.* In two years more Rammohun Roy became, by the death of his two brothers, without children, sole heir to the patrimonial inheritance, which was considerable. Soon afterwards, he removed from Burdwan to Moorshedabad ; where he sent forth, in Persian, with an Arabic preface, his first published work, an Essay on the Idolatry of all Religions. In this tract, he asserted the unity of the Supreme Being ; and openly assailed the doctrines both of the Hindoos and Mahommedans ;—nor is it probable that those of the nominally orthodox Christians were spared. The work raised up a host of enemies. No one attempted to answer his arguments ; but such was the clamour raised against him, that he found it convenient, in 1814, to remove to Calcutta, and take up his permanent residence in the capital of the British power in India. He here assembled around him a number of intelligent inquiring Hindoos, of kindred sentiments with himself ; with whom he joined, statedly, in social worship. He appears, about this period, to have devoted much of his time to the critical study of the sacred books of the Brahmins : especially the more ancient records of their religion. By the perusal of these he became convinced that the original faith of Hindooism, is a pure theism :—inculcating the existence, perfections, and worship of one Eternal, Infinite and All-perfect Mind :—the sole Creator and Preserver of the Universe :—who is alone

* Since this discourse was preached, I find that the author of a life of Rammohun Roy, which appeared in *The Asiatic Journal*, states that he was actually disinherited by his father, on account of his opinions ; but that he *necessarily* acquired the property, on the death of his elder brothers.

God, and alone deserving of divine honours ;—and that the idolatry and polytheism of the Hindoos are the inventions of interested priests and superstitious votaries in modern times. Having, as he thought, discovered the great doctrines of the Unity and Spirituality of the Godhead in the Hindoo Scriptures, he hastened to convey to his countrymen a knowledge of the interesting fact ; by translating several chapters from the Veds and the whole of the Vedant from the Sanscrit,—which is a dead language, only understood by the learned,—into the common languages of the country ;—the Bengallee and Hindoostanee. Of the Vedant he also published an abridgment which he afterwards translated into English. All his publications upon this subject, which amounted to the large number of *nine*, he printed and circulated *gratuitously*, at his own private expense ; which must have been considerable. In the English translation of his abridgment of the Vedant, he says :—

“ My constant reflections on the inconvenient, or rather injurious rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry, which more than any other Pagan worship, destroys the texture of society ; together with compassion for my countrymen, have compelled me to use every possible effort to awaken them from their dream of error ; and by making them acquainted with the Scriptures, enable them to contemplate, with true devotion, the unity and omnipresence of Nature’s God. By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahmin, have exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches of some of my relations, whose prejudices are strong, and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system. But these, however accumulated, I can tranquilly bear : trusting that a day will arrive, when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice, perhaps, acknowledged with gratitude. At any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation : my motives are acceptable to that Being, who beholds in secret and compensates openly.”

In the preface to another of his publications,—after intimating that sorrow and remorse can scarcely fail,

sooner or later, to be the portion of him who is conscious of having neglected opportunities of rendering benefit to his fellow creatures,—a sentiment which was firmly rooted in his heart, and exercised a constant influence over his mind,—he adds :—

“ From considerations like these, it has been, that I, although born a Brahmin, and instructed in my youth, in all the principles of that sect, being thoroughly convinced of the lamentable errors of my countrymen, have been stimulated to employ every means in my power to improve their minds, and lead them to the knowledge of a purer system of morality. Living constantly among Hindoos of different sects and professions, I have had ample opportunities of observing the superstitious puerilities, into which they have been thrown by their self-interested guides, who, in defiance of the law, as well as of common sense, have succeeded but too well in conducting them to the temple of idolatry ; and while they hide from their view the true substance of morality, have infused into their simple hearts, a weak attachment to its mere shadow.”

After enumerating some of the evils arising from the existing theory and practice of Hindooism, and noticing the encouragement held out by it to every species of immorality and crime,—he thus proceeds :—

“ My reflections upon these solemn truths, have been most painful, for many years. I have never ceased to contemplate with the strongest feelings of regret, the obstinate adherence of my countrymen to their fatal system of idolatry,—enduring,—for the sake of propitiating their supposed deities, the violation of every humane and social feeling. And this, in various instances ; but more especially in the dreadful acts of self-destruction, and the immolation of the nearest relations, under the delusion of conforming to sacred religious rites. I have never ceased, I repeat, to contemplate these practices with the strongest feeling of regret, and to view in them the moral debasement of a race who, I cannot help thinking, are capable of better things : whose susceptibility, patience, and mildness of character, render them worthy of a better destiny. Under these impressions, therefore, I have been impelled to lay before them translations of parts of their scripture, which inculcate not only the enlightened worship of one God, but the purest principles of morality ; accompanied with such notices as I deemed requisite to oppose the arguments of the Brahmins, in defence of their beloved system. Most earnestly do I pray that the whole may, sooner or later, prove efficient, in producing on the minds of Hindoos, in general, a conviction of the

rationality of believing in and adoring the Supreme Being only : together with a complete perception and practice of that grand and comprehensive moral principle,—‘ *Do unto others as ye would be done by.*’ ”

To say that Rammohun Roy experienced much opposition in his efforts to raise the minds of his countrymen from the gross errors of the prevalent faith, is only to say that priests are priests. But he has told the world that he had, likewise, some encouragements.

“ It is with no ordinary feelings of satisfaction,” he says, in the preface to another of his translations, from the Veds,—“ that I have already seen many respectable persons of my countrymen, to the great disappointment of their spiritual guides, rise superior to their original prejudices, and inquire into the truths of religion.” “ It seems to me,” he elsewhere remarks, “ that I cannot better employ my time, than in an endeavour to illustrate and maintain truth ; and to render service to my fellow labourers, confiding in the mercy of that Being, to whom the motives of our actions, and the secrets of our hearts are known.”

I have extracted these passages at length, because they shew, in a remarkably clear light, the mind and character of Rammohun Roy. Judge of these passages by a fair standard.—Consider them as the compositions of one reared in ignorance of the Gospel, and in the practice of the hideous ceremonial of Hindoo paganism, where all tended to corrupt, to deaden, and to destroy, at once moral feeling and social sympathy ; and you will pronounce them truly wonderful. For grandeur of thought, for sublime piety, for pure and benevolent morality,—I recollect nothing like them, or to be compared with them, in the writings of the ancient classics ; so far as my knowledge of them extends. And it has been truly remarked, that the mind which cherished such sentiments, was well prepared for the admission of the truths of the Gospel.

From some expressions in the foregoing extracts, you

will have conjectured that the establishment of a better theology and a purer mode of worship among the Brahmins and other Hindoos, was not the exclusive object of his concern. To his immortal honour, it deserves to be recorded, that Rammohun Roy was the first man in the Indian dominions of Britain—the first man,—Native or European,—who raised his voice against the practice of burning widows on the tomb of their husbands. In this cause he laboured with his usual energy, talent, and perseverance. He presented some memorials to the Government on the subject, drawn up with remarkable clearness and force. He published several tracts intended and powerfully calculated to influence the minds of his own countrymen. Nor were his exertions vain.—Some years before his death, he had the satisfaction of seeing his benevolent purposes carried into effect by an edict, abolishing for ever, the practice of the Suttee: and, what rendered the result still more satisfactory, this decree was sanctioned by the approbation of every intelligent and influential Hindoo, with the exception of those who had a direct interest in the continuance of the abomination. Had he done no other good but this, in his lifetime, who would dare to say that he lived for nought?

During his residence in Calcutta, he formed a small society of persons like himself, of high Brahmin caste, for the worship of one God in Unity according to the principles of the Veds and Vedant. But his attention seems to have soon been turned to the Christian religion. From the perusal of the New Testament, in his long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth, he found, as he asserts, “the doctrines of Christ more conducive

to moral principles, and better adapted to the use of moral beings, than any which had come to his knowledge." The doctrine of the Trinity, however, which was generally professed by all the Christians with whom he was acquainted, and which appeared to him quite as objectionable as the Polytheism of the Hindoos, presented an insuperable obstacle to his conversion. He was, however, too candid an inquirer to condemn Christianity in the mass, on account of one real or supposed difficulty. Finding that in other respects, the system fully approved itself to his understanding, he determined to institute an exact and impartial inquiry into its teaching on this important subject. For this purpose, Rammo-hun Roy, a Heathen and an unbeliever, undertook a task which comparatively few professing Christians, with all their loudly vaunted zeal for the sacred Scriptures, would have the courage to encounter. He determined to study the books of the Old and New Testament, critically, in the original languages, with the best helps.—For this purpose, he resolved to make himself master of the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Chaldee tongues: and such was his zeal, that in a comparatively short period, he accomplished the Herculean task. I question whether one in one hundred of the ranters at Anti-Education Meetings, have ever done, or attempted half so much, out of zeal for the Bible. Having attentively perused the original records of the faith, he rose from the undertaking with a firm persuasion that the doctrine of the Trinity is not inculcated in them; and that the Christian religion is true and divine. And this opinion he openly avowed, and consistently maintained, to the end of his days.

The conclusions arrived at by such a mind, on a subject so weighty, are too important to be passed over without a more minute consideration.

It is evident that Rammohun Roy had no motive to bias him to any one particular view of the Christian doctrine, in preference to another. With him, all theological systems were on a par. Whether the Bible inculcated Trinitarianism or Unitarianism, was to him a matter of perfect indifference. All that he was anxious to obtain, was a knowledge of what it really taught. We have seen the mental preparation which he brought to the study of the Sacred Volume. We have seen the assiduity with which he applied himself to the task.—He read the book over carefully, in the original ; omitting nothing ; deliberately weighing every argument that seemed to bear upon the question which he was so desirous of solving ; and availing himself of all aid that he could procure from commentators and divines : but without implicitly relying upon their authority where their arguments did not satisfy his understanding. Seldom has the sacred page been perused by a more assiduous, a more competent, or more impartial inquirer. Such being his circumstances and feelings, Rammohun Roy searched the Word of God, that he might learn what it actually taught concerning the Deity himself. And what did he find recorded in its pages ? Did he find it therein revealed that “ there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one, the same in substance, equal in power and glory ? ” Did he read in the Scriptures of a “ triune God ? ” Did he discover there, that self-contradictory farrago of conflicting assertions, which the Creed “ called

the Creed of St. Athanasius," declares must be believed by whosoever would be saved? No, my Christian brethren; Rammohun Roy, with all his devoted diligence of investigation, discovered none of these things in the Bible;—nothing to the same effect with them;—nothing bearing to them the most distant resemblance. He there found not a single word respecting a "holy, blessed, and glorious trinity,—three persons and one God;" he found there, no "God the Son;" no "God the Holy Ghost." He found there no mention of any God, but the "One God, THE FATHER, of whom are all things." He says himself, "the doctrine of the trinity appears to me *so obviously unscriptural*, that I am pretty sure from my own experience and that of others, that no one possessed of merely *common sense* will fail to find its unscripturality, after a methodical study of the Old and New Testament, unless previously impressed in the early part of his life with *creeds* and *forms of speech* preparing the way to that doctrine." If, as many of our fellow Christians tell us, the doctrine of the trinity lies at the foundation, nay, is itself the foundation of all the truths which Jesus Christ came from Heaven to teach, is it not strange that the sacred writers should have buried it in a concealment so deep, that it escaped the penetrating search of an inquirer like Rammohun Roy? And is not the mystery rendered tenfold more mysterious, by the supposition of a plenary inspiration, dictating every word and syllable of the Divine oracles? Can we suppose that the Holy Spirit would clothe or rather disguise its revelations in words and phrases so inadequate to their intended object, that to the mind of an inquirer such as this, they seemed not only *not to teach* the tenet

which is supposed to be the most important of all those that they were designed to convey, but even expressly and distinctly to teach *the very contrary*? 'This, to me, at least, appears strange; and I respectfully submit to the supporters of the doctrine to which I have alluded, that it is a point, well worthy of their careful consideration.

Again.—We are told by some of our fellow Christians that our Lord Jesus Christ, at the same time that he was truly and properly a man, was also the Almighty and Eternal God, the Creator and Preserver of the Universe. We are told that the disciples who wrote accounts of his life and summaries of his doctrine, knew, at the time of the composition of their works, that the friend and companion with whom they had lived on a footing of the most familiar intimacy, whose wanderings they had accompanied, whose sorrows they had shared; with whom they had celebrated the ordinance of the Supper on the night in which he was betrayed,—and whom they had beheld expiring in agony, nailed upon the cross of Golgotha,—was no other than that Omnipresent and Omnipotent Being, whose uncontrolled energy sustains all worlds, and whose ceaseless bounty supports all creatures. The disciples, we are told, knew this. 'They have expressed it in their works so clearly and so frequently,—as we are told,—that the admission of the stupendous fact,—a fact, “at which reason stands aghast, and faith, itself, is half-confounded,”—is absolutely necessary to vindicate both their veracity and that of their divine master. But although this is a doctrine, which, *if true*, must have shone out conspicuously in every page and paragraph of the New Testament,—a doctrine,

which, if true, the disciples of Jesus would have *over and over again repeated* with every copious variety of expression, emphasis, and admiration ;—it is one which Rammohun Roy,—the learned, laborious, and unprejudiced investigator,—could not discover in the writings of the evangelists and apostles. To use his own words : “ I should have felt no apprehension that even the most ignorant Hindoos, if left to the guidance of their own unprejudiced views of the matter, could misconceive the clear and distinct assertions they (the books of the New Testament,) *everywhere* contain, of the Unity of God, and the *subordinate nature* of his messenger, Jesus Christ.” Elsewhere, he says,—“ The Scriptures, indeed, in several places, declare that the Son was superior even to the angels in Heaven, living from the beginning of the world to eternity, and that the Father created all things by him and for him. At the same time, I must, in conformity to those very authorities, believe him as produced by the Supreme Deity among created beings.” And again.—“ His life,” (the life of Jesus,) “ declares him to have been as represented in the Scriptures, pure as light, innocent as a lamb, necessary for eternal life as bread for a temporal one, and great as the angels of God : or rather, greater than they.”* These were the views which the writings of the New Testa-

* From the expressions used in these extracts, I feel myself justified in claiming this illustrious man as a believer in the pre-existence and superhuman dignity of our Lord. Nor am I singular in putting this interpretation upon his words. Dr. Rees, in the preface to the London Edition of his works, says on behalf of the *Unitarian Book Society*, “ They are aware, that holding as they do, the strict and proper humanity of Christ as one of the fundamental tenets, they may possibly be charged with a dereliction of principle, in circulating under their authority, a work which maintains his pre-existence and super-angelic dignity. But they rest their defence, &c.” *Pref.* p. xviii.

ment appeared to Rammohun Roy, to convey ; and which in his second and final “ Appeals,” he has most ably and triumphantly vindicated, on the authority of those very Scriptures themselves. Strange that the doctrine of Christ’s Supreme Deity, if contained in the works of the evangelists and apostles, should have completely eluded the observation of so patient and industrious an inquirer ! This also is a difficulty, for which it behoves our Trinitarian brethren to account.

Farther.—We frequently read in the creeds and catechisms of human composition, statements of doctrine which imply that man is by nature in a state so corrupt and depraved, that he neither possesses power to do the will of God, nor to repent of his sins. We hear it strenuously asserted, that these things require the operation of a *special grace* ; which is vouchsafed to some, and denied to others, in accordance with the tenour of God’s eternal decree. It is frequently affirmed that faith itself is the fruit of this special grace ; and that without faith,—including in that term, a full belief in all the doctrines which the framers of the catechisms and creeds referred to, are pleased to consider essential or fundamental,—no works that men can do, no repentance that they can offer, no amendment that they can effect,—no effort, no exertions, however determined and persevering,—will be accepted by the Supreme Being, or recommend them to his favour and forgiveness. I am aware that it is difficult to state such doctrines, without appearing to exaggerate ; but I have inserted nothing in this enumeration which I am not prepared to justify, by reference to the acknowledged standards of various churches ; and I am persuaded

that the candid and intelligent among our friends, who call themselves orthodox, will admit that I have not given an unfair account of their opinions. Now, as the doctrines above detailed, refer to a most important subject, the relation between man as a moral being, and God as a moral governor;—a relation which it is one main object of every revelation to explain and to apply, we should expect to find them fully illustrated in the Sacred Volume; and so minutely specified, that it would be impossible even for the comparatively heedless reader of Scripture, either to overlook or to misconceive them. Such a reader as Rammohun Roy, would surely have been able to obtain some knowledge of these doctrines, had they been revealed in the writings of the apostles. But no trace of them appears in his writings. On the contrary, he in several places very distinctly intimates his dissent from these tenets. To this effect is one passage which I select as an instance of his mode of treating such subjects. After quoting some texts from the Gospel of John, he continues;—

“These passages, and many others of a similar import, exhibit clearly that love of, and adherence to Jesus can be evinced solely by obedience to the divine commandments. But if the observance of these commandments be treated as practically impossible, the love of Jesus and adherence to him, must likewise be so considered : and Christianity altogether regarded as existing only in theory.

“I appeal to the Reverend Editor himself whether we are to set at defiance the express commandments of Jesus, under the supposition that the manifestation of the love enjoined by him is practically impossible? Yet this we must do, if we are to adopt the position of the Editor, found in his Review, p. 111, ‘that the most excellent precepts, the most perfect law can never lead to happiness and peace, unless by causing men to take refuge in the doctrine of the cross’—meaning, I presume, the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, as an atonement for the sins of mankind.

“As the Reverend Editor has most fairly and justly confined himself to arguments founded on the authority of the Divine Teacher himself, I should hope to be allowed to beg him to point out, in order to establish his position, even a single passage pronounced by Jesus, enjoining a refuge in such a doctrine as all-sufficient or indispensable for salvation ; so that his position thus supported, may be placed in competition with that founded on those passages which I have quoted in the foregoing paragraph, shewing both the indispensableness and the all-sufficiency of the excellent precepts in question to procure salvation.”

“In reliance,” he elsewhere remarks, “on numerous promises found in the sacred writings, we ought to entertain every hope of enjoying the blessings of pardon from the Merciful Father through *repentance*, which is declared the only means of procuring forgiveness of our failures.” Repentance he calls in another place, “the most acceptable atonement on our part to the All-merciful, when we have fallen short of our duty.”

Such were the sentiments of this distinguished convert. Such the form of Christianity which he embraced ; and which alone he considered worthy of all acceptation among men. Indeed there exist in his own writings sufficient proofs that had he found the doctrines, commonly called orthodox, in the Bible, he neither could nor would have become a Christian : seeing that he looked on some among them as not less irrational and absurd than those of the idolatrous Hindooism in which he had been educated, and which his reason had compelled him to renounce. But since, the more he examined the sacred oracles of the Christian faith, the more did it commend itself to his heart and to his understanding, he no longer felt the scruples which had at first deterred him from the adoption of the religion of the Gospel : and Rammohun Roy became an open and avowed believer in Christ Jesus.

No sooner had he come to this most important conclusion, than he resolved to impart to his idolatrous countrymen a knowledge of the holy and benevolent religion which he had embraced, in that form which he

thought best adapted to their state of mind. With this view he published in 1819, a short tract, in English, Sanscrit, and Bengallee, entitled “ *The precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness*”—consisting entirely of extracts from the discourses of our Lord, omitting all the passages which have been urged as the foundation of particular tenets by the supporters of controverted doctrines: and also most of the narratives and miraculous incidents.—His reasons for following this course are stated by himself in the brief preface prefixed to the work.

“I feel persuaded,” he says, “that by separating from the other matters contained in the New Testament, the moral precepts found in that work, these will be more likely to improve the hearts and minds of men of different persuasions and degrees of understanding. This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men’s minds to high and liberal notions of one God, who has equally subjected all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank or wealth, to change, disappointments, pain and death, and has equally admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which he has lavished over nature,—and is also so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to God, to themselves, and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in the present form.”

The conduct of Rammohun Roy in presenting to his countrymen the didactic and moral parts of the Gospel, at first, in a detached form, was evidently prompted by reflection on the experience of his own conversion. These were the passages which first attracted his own attention, interested his feelings and allured his mind; he naturally concluded they were the most likely to engage the souls of other persons similar in faith and habits. His procedure was warranted by reason; for there is nothing in the nature of things, or in the laws of morality that requires any advocate to

bring forward, at the very outset, those parts of his case, which, as he well knows, may and must prevent him from obtaining a hearing in urging what farther he has to advance. It was demanded by policy; for had Rammohun Roy insisted upon the doctrinal and miraculous portions of the New Testament, in addressing persons unprepared to receive them, he would only have confirmed them in their prejudices, and strengthened them in their obstinate rejection of Christianity altogether. Whereas, by presenting to them those sections, whose truth, beauty, benevolence, and utility, could not but be apparent to every candid observer, he took the most promising means of securing their attention and favour, when he should afterwards have occasion to introduce the other portions of the sacred volume to their notice. His conduct was sanctioned by the example of the apostles of Christ.—In this sense, Paul openly avowed to some of his converts, that he “*fed them with milk and not with meat, because they were not able to bear it* ;” and even Christ himself spoke the word unto the multitudes who frequented his preaching, “*as they were able*” to receive it. For the same purpose, he spoke much to them in parables; “*that seeing they might see and not perceive; that hearing they might hear and not understand* :”—that is, that they might attain to some impressions of the truth without their knowledge, unaware of the process by which it was acquired.

We might suppose that these reasons would have been sufficiently obvious, especially after the explicit statements of Rammohun Roy, in his preface, to secure him from misinterpretation. Coming from a man of his profound learning, undoubted integrity, and unwearied as-

sidiuity, we might suppose they would have met with a warm welcome from every friend of Christianity in India; and, more especially, that the missionaries who had devoted themselves to the laborious task of diffusing the principles of the Gospel among the Hindoos, would be eager to embrace such a fellow-labourer; and, anxious to avail themselves of his zeal, his abilities, and his knowledge, to aid them in their mighty enterprise. Nay, it would not have been unreasonable to expect, that they might have re-considered their own plan of operation, in order, if necessary or expedient, to bring it into closer conformity with that adopted by one so much better acquainted than themselves with the temper and feelings both of the Moslem and Hindoo population. But, unfortunately for Rammohun Roy, and most unfortunately for the progress of Christianity in India, the missionaries were more wedded to the peculiarities of a sect, than eager to avail themselves of the services of this illustrious convert. To the shame of the Christian world, it must be told, that the first obstruction which Rammohun Roy encountered, in his well-meant efforts to bring his countrymen to the knowledge and belief of Christianity, was thrown in his way, not by the idolatrous Hindoos;—not by the Brahmin priests;—but by Christians and Christian missionaries. The orthodoxy of the Serampore divines was of the first water. They were Calvinists, of the strictest sect; and they could not endure that the faith of the Gospel should be presented to the eyes of those among whom they laboured, unaccompanied by the inculcation of the Trinity in Unity; and the two natures of Jesus Christ. It was this omission, on the part of Rammohun Roy,—for it amounted to no

more,—he had not said one word against the doctrine of the Trinity,—which induced the missionaries, through Doctor Marshman, their leader and organ, to speak of Rammohun Roy in their periodical work (“The Friend of India,”) as “*an intelligent Heathen ! whose mind is as yet COMPLETELY OPPOSED to the grand design of the Saviour’s becoming incarnate.*”

This expression, and the observations by which it was accompanied, produced an “Appeal to the Christian public,” from Rammohun Roy; in which he showed the unfairness of the epithet applied to himself, and justified the method which he had pursued, in compiling the Precepts of Jesus. Doctor Marshman having, in subsequent publications, defended his original remarks, Rammohun Roy published, successively, a “Second Appeal,”—and a “Final Appeal,” in which he enters minutely into the argument concerning the doctrines of the Trinity, and hypostatic union. In these publications, he has, by copious and cogent reasoning, proved the Absolute Unity of the Supreme Being, the Father, to be the Fundamental Principle of all the revelations recorded in the Old and New Testaments; and while he admits the pre-existence and angelic dignity of the Son of God, he has demonstrated, by an array of Scriptural authority, that one might suppose would carry conviction to the mind of the most prejudiced reader,—that he was,—not God himself—but his Son,—his messenger and agent; deriving all his power and authority from the Father;—acting always in subordination to the Father’s will;—by him rewarded for his humiliation and obedience;—and ever submissively owning his dependance on that Great Being who had invested him with the commission which he bore. But, in expressing his opinions upon these

doctrines which have excited so much zeal in disputants, and so much heat between contending parties,—he never once allows an intemperate or rash expression to escape him ; much less any thing savouring of ill will or bitterness towards his opponents. Candour and justice oblige me to add, that, with the one exception of the offensive phrase in the Review of the Precepts of Jesus, which called forth his First Appeal, the reverend antagonist of Rammohun Roy was equally mild and temperate. Seldom, indeed, has a controversy so important been carried on in a more courteous and Christian spirit ; or one more likely to conduce to the discovery of truth. Of the merits of the respective disputants, it becomes not me to speak. My own views would probably give a tincture to my remarks ; but one, not likely to be prejudiced in favour of the Unitarian advocate, declares, that in him a giant had entered the arena of controversy ; and that, in India, he had not met with his match.*

It deserves to be recorded, in tracing the history of this controversy, that the first three publications of Rammohun Roy,—namely, “ *The Precepts of Jesus*,” and the First and Second “ *Appeals*,” had been printed at the Baptist Mission press ; but, on his presenting his “ *Final Appeal*,” he was informed, by the acting pro-

* The Editor of *The India Gazette*, advertng to this discussion, and to the other labours of this distinguished native, thus writes :—“ We say distinguished, because he is so among his own people, by caste, rank, and respectability ; and, among all men, he must ever be distinguished, for his philanthropy, his great learning, and his intellectual ascendancy, in general.” As to the controversy arising out of the Precepts of Jesus, the Editor says, that whatever other effects it may have caused, “ it still farther exhibited the acuteness of his mind, the logical power of his intellect, and the unrivalled good temper with which he could argue ;” and that “ it roused up a most gigantic combatant in the theological field ; a combatant who, we are constrained to say, has not yet met with his match here.”

prietor,—"although in the politest manner possible,"—that he declined printing any other work which he might publish on the same subject. Rammohun Roy was, therefore, under the necessity of purchasing types for his own use, and of depending principally on native aid for the execution of the work. The conduct of the Rajah, on another occasion, was the exact converse of this. When a letter, impugning his sentiments, appeared in a Madras newspaper, and his own reply, though brief and respectful, was refused admission, he went to the expense of printing the letter for circulation as a small pamphlet. But such was his scrupulous impartiality, that he prefixed the attack of his adversary *verbatim*, in order that every reader might have both sides of the argument fairly before him. And, in the preface to his Final Appeal, he proposes to establish a monthly publication for discussing the scriptural arguments for and against the doctrine of the Trinity, which are derived from the various books of the Old and New Testament.

"If," he adds, "any of the Missionary gentlemen choose to profit by the opportunity thus afforded them, of defending and diffusing the doctrines they have undertaken to preach, I request that an Essay on the Book of Genesis, of the kind above intimated, may be sent to me by the middle of the month; and, if confined within reasonable limits,—not exceeding a dozen or sixteen pages,—I hereby engage to cause it to be printed and circulated *at my own charge* : and, also, that a reply, *not exceeding the same number of pages*, shall be published along with it, by the beginning of the ensuing month." *

* It is singular, that this offer of the eminent Brahmin corresponds exactly in principle, and almost exactly in expression, with a proposal made to the Intolerants in the Synod of Ulster, at Cookstown, in 1828, by the Rev. Doctor Montgomery, in the name of the Remonstrants. But neither he nor any of his friends knew at the time, that the plan suggested, was sanctioned by so high an authority as that of Rammohun Roy.

This offer,—which was not accepted, nor, so far as I am aware, noticed in any way by the gentlemen of the mission,—contrasts advantageously with their refusal to allow him the use of their types, even for payment. These Reverend Divines might have learned a lesson of Christian candour and liberality from him whom they styled a Heathen.

It is not to be supposed, that his old antagonists, the idolatrous Brahmins, were idle spectators of this controversy. At the time that the Reverend Missionaries were labouring zealously to exclude him from the pale of Christianity, and from the honour of the Christian name, a legal process was set on foot, to deprive him of *caste*, and consequently of his patrimony, on the ground of his apostacy from Hindooism, and adoption of a new religion. The proceedings were tedious, vexatious, and expensive ;—but, at length, the defendant succeeded in establishing, to the satisfaction of the court, that *caste* is not a religious, but *a civil institution* ; and, consequently, is not to be forfeited by a simple change of faith. This decision, however, did not prevent several of his friends, and part of his family, from estranging themselves from him ; thus subjecting his affectionate heart to a severe trial. It is to this circumstance that he alludes, when he says,—

“I am aware, that difference of sentiment has already occasioned much coolness towards me, in the demeanour of persons whose friendship I hold very dear ; and that this protracted controversy has not only prevented me from rendering my humble services to my countrymen, by various publications which I had projected in the native languages, but has also diverted my attention from all other literary pursuits, for three years past. Notwithstanding these sacrifices, I feel well satisfied with my present engagements, and cannot wish that I had pursued a different course ; since, whatever may be the opinion of the world, my own

conscience fully approves my past endeavours to defend what I esteem the cause of truth."

In the midst of all these complicated and perplexing occupations, this indefatigable philanthropist found time to organize some charitable associations,—the first ever known among the natives of India,—and to establish several schools, in the town and neighbourhood of Calcutta, for the improvement of the rising generation, and more especially the female children. To these seminaries, he paid close attention. They were carried on entirely at his own expense; and the duty of superintending them appears to have been considered by him, as affording an agreeable relaxation from family dissensions, legal investigations, and controversial discussions.

He had long cherished a wish to visit England,—the sacred land of freedom and truth;—but his voyage was long delayed by the proceedings to which we have adverted. At length, he arrived at Liverpool, in April, 1831, commissioned, by the Emperor of Delhi, to watch over his interests, in the approaching discussions relating to the India Bill; and raised, by his *firmaun* or patent, to the dignity of Rajah. Soon afterwards, he proceeded to London, where I was then resident; and there first I had the high gratification and honour of forming his acquaintance, and being admitted to some degree of intimacy with him. As the Rajah, on the recommendation of a mutual friend,* placed his third and youngest son, who had accompanied him to Europe, in the family of Mr. Davison and myself, for the purpose of education, and

* The Rev. James Yates, author of the "*Vindication of Unitarianism*," in reply to Doctor Wardlaw; and at present pastor of Carter-lane, London; where may God prosper his ministry!

as he seldom failed to visit us at least once every week, to inquire as to his progress,—I enjoyed much more frequent opportunities than I could otherwise have hoped to possess, of acquiring a knowledge of his manner and mind, as developed in ordinary intercourse. I believe I only speak the general sentiment of all who knew him, when I declare, that the extent, vigour, and profundity of his mind were much more evident to those who conversed with him personally, than to those who only knew him in his works. Never have I known a person who brought a greater variety of knowledge to bear upon almost every topic on which he conversed;—never one whose own remarks were more original, ingenious, solid, and useful. Yet, with all his great attainments, he was a modest seeker after knowledge. He did not disdain to ask information from the youngest person in company, if he seemed disposed and qualified to afford it: for he was far removed from the puerile ambition of wishing to appear a universal genius.—But he chiefly addressed himself to the old, to whom he always paid remarkable deference and respect. He frequently questioned them respecting their recollection of the state of moral and political knowledge in their youthful days, and as compared with the present time. He loved to hear of the progress of society in philanthropy, virtue, and religion; and to discuss the means by which that progress might be accelerated.

It occurred to me, that, even while discussing the affairs of England, his beloved India was uppermost in his thoughts. Often, after conversing on the means adopted for the support and education of the poor,—upon the industrial and commercial system, and upon

the social machinery of Britain, some expression would escape him, which impressed the attentive observer with the conviction, that the Rajah was treasuring up in his mind, facts and suggestions that might be of service on his return to that country, for which his bosom never ceased to beat with a son's affectionate solicitude. It was for India, that he left his native land ;—it was for India, that he sojourned among strangers ; subjecting himself to the thousand inconveniencies of a residence amidst a people differing totally in manners and customs from those which he was obliged to maintain ;—it was for India, that he exposed a delicate constitution to the vicissitudes of a strange climate, and risked the loss of health and ease, and endangered life itself.

The purity no less than the benevolence of his mind, was conspicuous in all the acts and words, and even the tones and looks, of the Rajah Rammohun Roy. Offences against the laws of morality, which are too often passed over as trivial transgressions in European society, excited the deepest horror in him. His whole manner and appearance discovered how much he shrunk from the very thought of them, when associated with the names of any for whom he had formerly felt respect. The admonitions which he addressed to his son, upon such subjects, were among the most impressive that I ever heard. They have left upon my mind the sentiment of a holy sublimity. It was an elevating thing, to hear the mild, solemn, and affectionate tones of that voice, inculcating the practice of whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of good repute ; and to behold the eye and the whole expressive countenance of the Rajah, beam-

ing with benevolence and piety. Never will the impression of those moments be effaced from the recollection of those who witnessed them. Nor was it for those only with whom he was closely connected, that the Rajah felt and expressed such sympathy. I can tell my countrymen, that for Ireland's welfare, he felt all the interest of a philanthropist. I remember well, that, on the first and only occasion when he attended divine worship in Carter-lane Chapel, during my ministry, my flock were engaged in making a collection for the relief of the suffering poor in the West of Ireland, then in a state of lamentable distress ; and when I read a letter from a clergyman in that quarter, giving an account of the state of things in his neighbourhood, the tears which fell from his eyes, declared how deeply he was moved by the recital. I have reason to think, that the liberal contribution which we were enabled to transmit to the general Committee, was materially aided by his generosity. The Rajah was habitually serious, pious, and even devout. He was in the daily habit of perusing, in a very thoughtful manner, some portion or portions of the Word of God ; and prayer, both public and private, was an ordinance which he never neglected.— This practice he observed, no matter what might be his avocations ; even when they were of such a nature that most Christians would hold them a plausible excuse for omitting the duty. He was, as his writings testify, a Unitarian Christian. Such he frequently avowed himself, both on the title page of his works, where the name appears ; and by his attendance upon the anniversaries of the Unitarian Association, in London. On one of these occasions, I heard him deliver his sentiments at

considerable length, with great force and correctness ; although the weak state of his health, at the time, rendered it impossible for him to make himself heard at a distance, and the speech consequently could not be reported. It chiefly dwelt upon the importance of practical principles, as compared with mere articles of faith ; and more especially those which are called mysteries.

One defect in his character, or perhaps I should say in his manner, the partiality of friendship would have led me to pass over in silence, or under a general admission of imperfection : but it has been publicly mentioned, and need not now be concealed ; the more especially, as I am persuaded that the more it is examined, the more will it appear to admit of extenuation. It is this : that either a personal disposition to acquiescence, or compliance with the laws of oriental politeness, sometimes induced him to act in such a way as allowed strangers to leave him with incorrect impressions of his opinions and views. With those whom he knew and loved, he conversed most freely and unreservedly upon all topics : and by them his sincerity and candour were most highly appreciated. But, in conversing with strangers,—and more especially those who called upon him out of mere curiosity, without any introduction or business of any kind, as multitudes did, he would not enter into controversy ; even though in shunning it, he yielded seeming assent to principles most opposite to his known opinions, and which he would rather have laid his head upon the block than have published to the world as his own. 'This has been set down as insincerity ; but, however contrary to our better regulated judgment, I am informed that it is no

more than is required of every person who aspires to the character of a well-bred man among the natives of India. It would be judging too harshly to condemn him, an Oriental and a Hindoo, for non-conformity to a European standard. After all, it would be difficult to assign a motive for the deception, if he had wished to deceive: and it is universally allowed, that few have sacrificed more to the cause of truth and sincerity, than he.

Another point which has been sometimes objected to in his conduct, is, in my mind, capable of a very easy defence: I allude to his anxiety to avoid every act by which he might forfeit the privileges of *caste*. It has been held that this anxiety shewed him to be wavering in his profession of Christianity. But, never was objection more futile. Even if the distinction of *caste* were founded on religious considerations, the Rajah might be defended on the same principles with the apostle Paul; who, with the Jews lived as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, though he himself strenuously maintained, that those restrictions to which he subjected himself, were abolished. But the best authorities are agreed that *caste* is a civil, not a religious institution.—Adherence to it, therefore, is no more a proof of insincerity in the profession of Christianity, than the retention of a title of nobility would have been. And when it is considered, that without *caste* he would have been cut off from intercourse with all the enlightened and learned among his countrymen,—and, at the same time, would have been deprived of his landed property, sufficient reason will be seen for the conduct which he pursued. This view of the origin of *caste* was not peculiar

to Rammohun Roy. It has been taken up by other competent and strictly impartial authorities; including the Abbé Dubois; the Danish Missionaries, at Travancore, the most successful of all the teachers of Christianity in India, who freely permit their converts to retain the distinction of *caste*; and, finally, by the Supreme Court of Hindoo law, at Calcutta, which, by its decision already mentioned, may be considered as having finally settled the question.

But, whatever be the merits or the defects of Rammohun Roy, they are now gone before a higher than any human tribunal. His lamented death has left to those who knew him, only the melancholy task of meditating upon his character, as a thing passed away. If any evil appears, be it shunned, as a warning. If much that is good shines forth, be it followed as a pattern: and he must indeed be an eminently virtuous Christian, who can derive no improvement from reflecting upon the example of the Rajah Rammohun Roy.

“In the early part of September, he arrived at Stapleton Grove, near Bristol, where his son had been passing his vacation, intending to proceed thence to winter in Devonshire. In Bristol, he attended worship at the Unitarian chapel in Lewin’s Mead; and there he had directed his son statedly to attend.

“Ten days after his arrival at the house of Miss Castles, his disorder began its attacks. He at first thought medical assistance unnecessary; but, on Thursday, the 19th September, Mr. Estlin, who had enjoyed much intercourse with him during the preceding week, called accidentally at Stapleton Grove, and found him so ill with feverish symptoms, as to occasion him considerable alarm. Medicines were prescribed and followed by some relief; but still there were indications of serious disorder. On the following Saturday, Dr. Pritchard visited him, and Dr. Carrick attended in consultation on Monday, the 23d.

“His indisposition experienced but a temporary check from the remedies: severe spasms, with paralysis, came on during Thursday, and he fell into a state of stupor during the afternoon of that day, from which

he never revived, but breathed his last at twenty-five minutes after two, on Friday morning, the 27th September. His son, and two Hindoo servants, with several attached friends, who had watched over him from the first day of his illness, were with him when he expired.

“Mr. Hare was also with him during the greater part of his illness; and Mr. Hare’s niece, who was well acquainted with his habits, and possessed his full confidence and strong regard, attended upon him day and night with a degree of earnest and affectionate solicitude, well deserving the epithet of filial.

“He repeatedly acknowledged, during his illness, his sense of the kindness of all around him, and in strong language expressed the confidence he felt in his medical advisers. He did not converse much, but was observed to be often engaged in prayer. He told his son and those around him that he should not recover.

“He was a remarkably stout, well-formed man, nearly six feet in height, with a fine, handsome, and expressive countenance. A cast for a bust was taken a few hours after his death.

“He was interred on Tuesday, 15th October, in the grounds of Stapleton Grove, without any religious service, save that which was offered up in silence in the hearts of those who were present at the solemn scene.”*

Thus departed, at the age of 52 years, one of the most extraordinary men whom the world has witnessed for centuries: one, whose freedom, vigour, and independence of thought, commanded the admiration even of adversaries; and whose amiable disposition, purity of mind, and benevolence of heart, attached to him, by indissoluble ties, the souls of all who were admitted within the circle of his friends: one whose ardent love of truth, and indefatigable search after it, led him to renounce prejudices the most dear, and connexions the most beloved; to embrace opinions once the most obnoxious, and to submit to losses and deprivations the most painful and severe. He was a man who left all and followed Christ: and closely did he tread in his mas-

* Extracted from a memoir of the Rajah, which appeared in *The Bristol Gazette*. Of this account, and of the biographical preface to the London edition of his works, I have freely availed myself, in the foregoing pages.

ter's footsteps. His integrity and philanthropy were never questioned, and could not be called in question. He fell in a land of strangers, surrounded by countenances on which his eye had never rested, till a few days before ; where feature, complexion, language, manners, all told him that he was dying in a foreign soil ; far from his beloved India, for whose good his heart beat unceasingly. He was carried off in the midst of his days, when much of active usefulness might have been expected in the course of nature. But, now,—all his benevolent plans are suddenly cut short, and all his high thoughts are perished. Alas ! how many hopes has this mysterious dispensation brought at once to a close !—We trusted,—we fondly trusted,—that it was he who should have redeemed unto Christ the Israel of the East ; but it has otherwise pleased God, and our duty is resignation. Let us hope that he will, in his own good providence, raise up other reformers, to finish the work so nobly begun ; and to complete that which is now left unfinished for lack of time. Let us pray the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth other labourers into this field, men like-minded with the RAJAH RAMMOHUN ROY.

I must hasten to a conclusion : but, before doing so, I would make one observation. I have said, that I consider Rammohun Roy as one of those great minds that dignify the profession of the Gospel. Let me now direct your attention to the value of his testimony in favour of Unitarian Christianity.

The force of prejudice is so great, and the strength of principles imbibed in early youth, and confirmed by education, so powerful, that it is extremely difficult for

a man who has been brought up in the belief of any religious creed, to throw it off in after-life, be it ever so erroneous. Such is the power of habit, that the slightest pretence of argument, if its tendency be to strengthen a preconceived opinion, will carry with it the force of demonstration ; and the soundest reasoning in opposition to an established prejudice, will pass unheeded, or be derided as a flimsy subterfuge. Rammohun Roy has observed, in one of his invaluable works,—teeming with sound philosophy and instinct with truth,—that if the belief that the idols of their gods are animated, were not early instilled into the minds of the Hindoo children, it would be impossible, in after life, to palm upon them so monstrous an absurdity ;—but, being so instilled and inculcated, it is almost equally impossible to prevail on them to reject it. This is a general law of the human mind. Hence, persons who have been reared in the profession of particular creeds and doctrinal views of Christianity, can seldom estimate fairly, the comparative weight of arguments for and against their own tenets. With the best intention to be candid and impartial, the mind has a bias, unknown to itself ; and this influences all its decisions. So strongly did this truth present itself to Doctor Watts, that, in one of the works which he published, while still a believer in the Trinity, he expressed a wish that the whole controversy on that subject could be submitted to the arbitration of some conscientious Turk or Indian, not a believer in Christianity, but furnished with the necessary aids for understanding the meaning of the Scriptures.* He in-

* This proposal gave occasion to one of the best works on the doctrine of the Trinity,—*Tomkins' Sober Appeal to a Turk or an Indian.*


timated his willingness to abide by that person's decision of the question. The experiment has been made. Its result has been such, as the friends of Unitarianism had long predicted. Rammohun Roy answers to all the conditions proposed. He is the Indian contemplated by Doctor Watts. After the fullest and most impartial examination, he has published to the world his conviction that the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be found in the Bible; and that the Scriptures are uniformly and decidedly Unitarian. The weight of this testimony is great. In my judgment, it deserves a place among the presumptive arguments in favour of Unitarian Christianity.

In conclusion.—Let us bless God, for the progress of the Gospel throughout the world, up to the present period. Let us glorify him for the illustrious men whom he has raised up to adorn its profession. Let us rejoice in the labours of those who have devoted their lives to the illustration and spread of its pure doctrines. Let us pray, that a succession of such labourers may be raised up to purify it still farther from those corruptions which yet obscure its native beauty. Let us trustfully anticipate the time, when, in its divine and simple majesty, it will be acknowledged and obeyed from the rising to the setting sun; the day, when “*JEHOVAH shall be King over all the earth; when there shall be ONE LORD, and his name One!*”

FINIS.

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